



Seattle's Comprehensive Plan Update

PRELIMINARY SCOPE OF WORK: LAND USE ELEMENT

The Comprehensive Plan's land use element outlines the City's strategy for accommodating the growth that will come to Seattle over time. Growth occurs through both natural growth (residents having children) and through immigration to the City. Most of Seattle's current residents moved to Seattle from somewhere else. If Seattle remains a good place for its current residents to live, it is likely to continue to be a place that attracts new residents.

The land use element lays out the Urban Village strategy for accommodating those new residents. This strategy builds on our mixed-use neighborhoods by concentrating growth in these areas. Transit service is already available in the urban villages. New services and City facilities focused in these urban villages provide for access to the greatest number of people.

The element also provides a foundation for future development in the city. Seattle is divided into different land use categories, such as single-family, multi-family, mixed-use commercial and industrial. The land use element provides the foundation for the regulations that help shape healthy communities appropriate to their intended character. This element pays particular attention to development that may occur along shorelines.

KEY ISSUES IN 2004 UPDATE

Growth Targets

One of the State Growth Management Act's requirements for the 2004 update is that the City update its estimates of future growth to include 51,510 households and 92,083 jobs over the period 2004-2024.

Key question: Do urban village-specific growth targets remain a useful planning tool?

Sustainability

The Urban Village strategy embraces the concept of sustainability. However, the connections between the Urban Village strategy and the goal of a sustainable future are not made explicit in the Comprehensive Plan. DPD is proposing to split the Land Use element into separate "Urban Village Strategy" and "Land Use" elements.

RELATED PLANNING WORK

Environmentally Critical Areas

The Growth Management Act requires a review of the City's Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) policies based on the best available science. In 2004, the ECA policies, which guide regulations for areas such as creeks, wetlands and landslide-prone areas, will be moved into the Comprehensive Plan with any appropriate amendments based on best available science.

Commercial Code Rewrite

DPD has committed to simplifying the Commercial Land Use Code while continuing to assure that the code supports the Comprehensive Plan's vision. This work may result in some changes to the commercial areas policies.

A proposed concept for revamping the code will be sent to the Mayor by the end of 2003. An Ordinance will be proposed in 2004.

South Lake Union

As work continues on supporting the South Lake Union Hub Urban Village as a center for the biotechnology industry, projections of future development are much higher than previous growth estimates.

Key question: Should South Lake Union be designated an Urban Center to recognize future expected growth?

Central Waterfront Planning

DPD is leading the development of a concept plan to reunite the urban fabric of the city with the central waterfront. This plan could lead to amendment to policies related to Elliott Bay and the Harborfront.

A draft concept plan is currently scheduled to be released in Spring 2004.

OTHER ISSUES

Readability

The Land Use element is sometimes confusing to read. Its structure can be improved by consolidating the discussion of some topics and by using a parallel structure for discussion of similar topics.

Growth Monitoring

The City currently uses urban-village specific growth targets to identify whether an area is growing too fast or growing too slow. The Comprehensive Plan, under Land Use policy L52, recommends a process for working with communities where growth is too fast or too slow, but the outcomes expected from that process are not identified.